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English 12 Honors: The Future

Ms. Alexis

**Environmental Issues in Literature:**

There is an underlying relationship between the environment and the humans that occupy it. Everything that we do that affects the Earth and its environment will later on affect us somehow. That is why it is our responsibility to step up and change the path that we are currently on, the one that will lead us to our own demise. If we continue down this path, we will only be destroying ourselves and the future of many.

Often times in literature, problems within our society are critiqued. The problem that is brought out in the book *Circle 9* by Anne Heltzel is that natural disasters are able cause emotional distress and can often change people. The main character Abby, wakes up next to a burning building and remembers nothing of what happened to her. Her clothes are full of soot and ashes. There is only one person that is alive, named Sam. She does not know Sam at all but being that he is the only other human she has to trust him. Sam takes her to live with him in this cave that he has turned into his home. Abby begins to have flashbacks and spurts of memories here and there. With these memories she soon starts to remember what happened. Abby is portrayed to be this selfish sort of cold hearted person. "It's all clear why she's crying; it's because I have won. She is no longer closer to Sam's heart. My own heart is so warm and full of Sam; it is the happiest I've been in so long." (Heltzel 82) After having gone through a terrible incident as waking up next to a burning building, not knowing anyone or even who you are, Abby feels that she needs Sam. She will do anything and everything to just have Sam to herself. People are desperate after experiencing a natural disaster to grasp onto something and or someone that allows them to feel good and safe, which is exactly what Sam was for Abby.

Issues such as actually being active about the environment and the problems that it holds are highlighted in the book *The Carbon Diaries: 2017* by Saci Llyod. The main character Laura Brown is a teenager who lives in London, that is currently beyond filthy. Laura and her friends that make up her band *dirty angels* sing about environmental issues and the government. Although they are teenagers, they feel strongly about what the current state of their environment is like which is terrible.

They're rebuilding the barrier, but there's always money and tech problems and so, basically a year after the flood, the whole city's under threat, big time. And the water keeps on rising. Last year, the Thames flooded 34 times. And each time it floods, more people leave. Property prices in the bad areas have dropped to joke levels. Everyone's to live in the hilly bits, like Hampstead and Shooter Hill. (pg.8)

The environment that these people are living in is in terrible condition which is no wonder why even the children decide to be active and speak out about the problems. Laura and her friends band really use their music and the only voices they have to do something about the tough problems that they are faced with due to their surroundings.

OK, so Discussion Point 3 on the agenda. What trends in the current political climate are ripe for exploitation for the revolution? He gazed around the all. "Obviously at this time, with mass unemployment, the backlash against nuclear power stations, the recession, the failing New Green Deal initiative of the government-all of these give us great hope to build a new future for the workers" I glanced up quickly, expecting it to be a joke, but no one was laughing The workers? Revolution? Red Dreads Parsnip Boy raised his hand. " With like...uh....all due respect this kind of...sort of...talk at meetings is kind of like...uh... redundant. We gotta get...active. I mean I sort of ...like to know how many of us are ....uh...like supporting the ....uh....Workers' Walk from Manchester to uh....basically uh...London? (Llyod 28)

People realize that instead of constantly saying that we need to “save the environment” that we need to actually do something. Set a plan and a course of action and execute it that way. Society needs to step up, as well as the government to try to help with these issues that our environment, similar to the book, is facing now.

**Environmental Issues in Real Life:**

**Emotional Effects on Humans Caused by Natural Disasters**

Most people think of natural disasters as things just happening, hence the name “natural” disasters, but when in reality we are the cause of them. Most of the times, natural disasters are able to cause a lot of destruction. People often times only feel the sudden effects that natural disasters have on them, such as physical ones. If someone is hurt, people respond to that immediately. If damage is done to property, people can clearly see the problem. But, when it comes to the emotional state of the persons who are involved with natural disasters, the problems are latent and not noticed till later. Confusion is natural for those who have been through and survived a natural disaster. When one first realizes what has happened to them, they go through a variety of feelings. Good feelings and bad feelings. Feelings ranging from the happiness of being alive and having survived, to feelings of immense sadness. “According to Dr. Lystad, ''There are six typical initial responses: fear, numbness and shock, confusion and difficulty in making decisions, desire for information, seeking help for oneself and family, and helpfulness to others.'' (Brozan) As well as having negative emotional effects on people, these disasters are also able to cause actual physical damage.

Delayed responses, which can surface months later, include, she said, changes in appetite, headaches, inability to sleep, anger, suspicion, apathy, depression, withdrawal from family and friends, disillusionment with official help, and guilt at not having been able to prevent or avoid the emergency. (Brozan)

It is strange how many of these symptoms are similar to those of depression. Which, should not really be a surprise, because anyone that has had to have gone through such an event like a hurricane or flood, and has been negatively affected by it would be more than upset about it. Recovery from natural disasters often comes in steps, with each step is a different emotion, almost like an emotional roller coaster.

Experts who have worked with survivors of disasters ranging from the Boston blizzard of 1978 to the eruption of Mount St. Helens in 1980 agreed that reactions fall into an almost predictable sequence. The initial shock - a stunning sense of astonishment and terror -is followed by euphoria at having survived. The Rev. Frank Reuter, pastor of the First Southern Baptist Church in Coalinga, Calif., site of the devastating earthquake last month, recalled: ''Three hours after it happened I saw people throwing Frisbees and setting up tents and campers.'' Then the elation dissolves rapidly in the face of reality and depression, ranging from mild to extreme, sets in. Finally recuperation begins. (Brozan)

The process of getting over a natural disaster is a hard one, that takes time and effort. The Earth is capable of having these effects on us. Sometimes, these natural disasters aren’t always so “natural”. Often times we are to blame for the catastrophic events that happen throughout the world. Which is why the belief that we will be our own demise is one that many do not dismiss. Especially with how the Earth is currently, full of random disasters that occur almost everyday, with millions winding up injured and sometimes worse.

**The Melting of Polar Ice Caps**

It is a definite that we humans are guilty for some of the destruction that has happened over the past years. We are most certainly responsible for the melting of the polar ice caps. Ice caps hold a large portion of the Earth’s water. When ice caps begin to melt due to the rising temperature of the Earth, the sea levels begin to rise as well. This rise in sea levels proves dangerous to certain cities that are located near the coasts. Due to the fact that they may very well be flooded over, causing major damage and land loss.

‘Scientists warn that should global warming continue unchecked, it could have a drastic effect on polar ice. Small variations over a short period of time could shrink the ice caps and raise world sea levels. Even a small rise in sea level could affect a large percentage of the world's population, and it could effectively destroy major cities like New York.’ (Lerner)

It is proven that even the slightest change to the Earth’s temperature can cause dangerous effects to these ice caps. If we continue to allow global warming to get out of control, then we are all doomed. Humans affect the environment and really add and take away from it.

Scientists believe that the growth of polar ice caps can be triggered by a combination of several global climatic factors. The major element is a small drop (perhaps no more than 15°F [9°C]) in average global temperature. The factors that cause this drop can be very complex and include fluctuations in atmospheric and oceanic carbon dioxide levels, increased amounts of dust in the atmosphere, heightened winds--especially in equatorial areas--and changes in surface ocean currents. (Lerner)

All these changes and factors that are talked about are things that humans are sometimes responsible for. Even though it is talking about the “growth of polar ice caps” rather than about them melting, it mostly proves how much of an effect we are able to produce. How much we are responsible for in this Earth. Our actions are greater than we think of them to be. What we do now will affect the planet and undoubtedly, affect the future.

**Natural Resources Are Running Low**

There are only so many natural resources that the Earth contains. We, humans, use them up for our own benefit. Sometimes we run out of these natural resources that are prosperous throughout this Earth. It does not mean that there are no more, we have just simply run out of the amount that we can get a hold of. If we continue to do so, then we will no longer have them for our use. “The last active cryolite mine, located in Greenland, closed in the 1980s, and manufacturers now rely on a synthetic alternative.” (Palmer) A synthetic alternative was mentioned, which is where one starts to see how the human race has really affected the authenticity of the resources that the Earth has supplied to us naturally. We use "fillers", not the real thing, just something that may serve as a substitute for that item. People may be wondering why running out of a natural resource is such a big deal. Perhaps it is the fact that if an important natural resource such as coal were to run out, they would be in a great deal of trouble.

Resource exhaustion used to be a hot topic among economists. Thomas Robert Malthus predicted in 1798 that land shortages would lead to famine and population collapse. In 1865, William Stanley Jevons predicted that Britain would soon run out of coal, bringing the economy crashing down, and others soon joined the gloomy chorus. (Palmer)

If such past of events have been caused by natural resource shortages and if what they say is true about history repeating itself, then that may very well be the outcome of our lives now and in the future. We may be just leading ourselves to doom with our need for the Earth’s natural resources.

**Progress/Solutions Being Made:**

**Conservation of Natural Resources**

Conservation is such an important topic that can very well lead us to bettering our planet. Conservation of the Earths natural resources is on the mind of many. The importance of conservation and what humans end up doing with it is essential to the future of the human race. However, the United States government has yet to take action towards making any type of effort of conservation.

From the beginning, American conservation ideas, informed by the science of ecology and the practice of resource management on public lands, spread to other countries and regions. In recent decades, however, the rhetoric of conservation has taken a prominent role in international development and affairs, and the U.S. government has taken a back-seat role in global environmental policy. The United Nations Environment Program (UNEP), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN), and the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) are some of today's most visible international conservation organizations. (Lerner)

Instead of having such a strong power such as the United States government there to help with conservation, there are organizations that are willing to put in the effort. At least strides are being made by individuals and groups to make a change in the world. There were times where conservation was sort of a “fad”. People began to admire the idea of conservation, considering the fact that they were more interested in the recreational use of lands that were conserved, it was still something that would help the environment in general.

Because of its more moderate and politically palatable stance, conservation became the more popular position by the turn of the century. By 1905, conservation had become a blanket term for nearly all defense of the environment. More Americans had come to live in cities, and to work in occupations not directly dependent upon resource exploitation. The urban population was sympathetic to the idea of preserving public land for recreational purposes and provided much of the support for the conservation movement from the beginning. (Lerner)

People are attempting to make a difference in their world by conserving. Not only are they working towards conserving natural resources, but land as well.

**Strides Towards Clean Energy**

Achieving a solid source of clean energy is of great importance for the world. Our main source of energy is fossil fuels. We burn these fossil fuels in order to obtain this energy. However, these fossil fuels are only hurting us. They act as pollutants that contaminate our ozone and the air we breathe in everyday. However, many are progressing towards finding sources of clean energy. Clean energy meaning the way we create the energy will not affect the world in a negative manner. Some clean energy examples would be wind power, solar energy, and water.

Clean energy basked in political popularity about a decade ago, as wind farms sprouted atop West Texas mesas. In 2005, Gov. Rick Perry and lawmakers approved a mandate to build 5,880 megawatts of renewable power capacity by 2015. They also backed the construction of billions of dollars’ worth of transmission lines to reach wind farms. (Galbraith)

Although many mandates and bills have been made and approved by large figures such as Rick Perry and others, clean energy has still been something that has yet to be fully obtained. Clean energy, an energy source that would be harmless to the planet and the humans and species that occupy it. Sounds like a great idea, one could possibly question as to why there is a big fuss about going through with it .

The costs of clean energy is very high, which explains just why having it available as our main go to source has been so difficult. Fossil fuels are simply cheaper than other options such as wind power.

As the session progresses, renewable energy advocates are bracing to defend critical policies that have helped Texas become the leading wind-power state. The ascendancy of the Tea Party, an abundance of cheap natural gas and tighter budgets have reduced the sway of the wind industry. Solar power advocates anticipate limited gains at best. (Galbraith)

There are many battles that go on to fight for a better source, a better option. Of course every good thing comes with a down side.

Wind groups will also guard against attacks on the renewable energy

mandate. Last month, the Public Utility Commission, which regulates the power

industry, recommended that lawmakers repeal it. The commission’s chairwoman,

Donna Nelson, has criticized wind power for straining the electric grid, an

assertion rejected by the industry. (Galbraith)

Nothing good will come without a downfall or a sacrifice that is needed to be made. People are willing to put the effort into helping others out with using clean energy. There are other sources such as solar energy that is efficient. Solar panels are the way that solar energy is obtained.

Advocates’ greatest hopes may center on a program meant to make it easier for businesses to install solar panels or to improve energy and water efficiency. The idea is to allow property owners to pay for the improvements through higher property tax assessments, after borrowing the money initially. (Galbraith)

At least now, people are working towards allowing others to have access to clean energy. So that no one is left out of being able to help the world by not using energy sources that will harm us in the present and the future.

**What Does The Future Hold For This Issue?**

There may be two possible paths for the human race to follow. These two paths contrast greatly from each other. However, they are similar because they will determine and answer who we are as a whole group. First possibility, humans decide to take action and responsibility for their decisions now and in the future. They decide that the planet is much greater than just them and their own lives. That their decisions will affect the future generations to come. Second option being that humans just decide that saving the planet and the environment is not of high importance. People will continue on with their lives, making the terrible decisions that we are currently making and leading us down a dangerous and dark path.

The ideal possibility that will happen to us is that people will, indeed, begin to realize the destruction that we are causing. We will realize our mistakes that we are making and stop them. Which will eventually allow us to stop the environment from being damaged anymore than it already is. Hopefully, by stopping the negative actions that we perform on the environment, we will lower the amount of natural disasters that “happen” to many individuals throughout the entire planet. Because, we are the cause of the many catastrophic events that take place erratically and when we least expect them to. If people are able to stop doing things that change the planet drastically, like the melting of the polar ice caps, then we will be able to prevent rising sea levels. By preventing this, we will be able to prevent so many other disasters. Disasters that cause many people to get injured and sadly many losses as well.

We will be able to realize the importance of the Earths natural resources. By realizing this importance, we will better appreciate them and not utilize them fully and entirely. If we continue to have activists that

really do care about what the future will be like, then we are bound to have more government involvement on what happens. The government and more important figures in the political area will being to make immense efforts forward. Making bills, mandates, and more that will do a variety of things to protect, conserve and reform all of what the environment offers and entails will surely make for a better, longer and more promising future for the occupants of Earth.

On the down side,another possibility, if people continue to be the ignorant people that they are and act as if nothing is wrong in this world, then we are all doomed for a dark future. People will continue to ignore the obvious environmental issues that we are currently facing each and everyday. They will just sit there, and watch the television every morning and every night and see the “terrible tsunami that hit such and such island” and the “destructive hurricane that pummeled through a state” or even “the sea levels rising to dangerous levels”. We will literally watch our world, the world that we have fought so hard to advance, go to hell. Humans have literally started from nothing and have worked their way up, further and further, becoming advanced beings with great technological advancements and impeccable medicine. Our advancements are meaningless if we do not use them to save the very planet that we live on, that we depend on. Our technology should help us with finding ways to produce cleaner energy. Or conserve the necessary natural resources that are so meaningful and important to us. Perhaps, even prevent our biggest cities filled with thousands of human beings from literally drowning. We will watch our own destruction and demise. If we do not do anything, if we continue down this path, then we are in for a hell of a ride. Our planet can only withstand and handle so much. We can compare it to a car. If we continue to use and use this car, over and over again, then it will eventually get older and start to not work as well as it used to. The Earth needs our help, all of these terrible things that are happening to and around us are its’ way of crying out for that help. It is our responsibility if we decide to stay and listen, or to turn a blind eye.

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